

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

S E C R E T STATE 212128

EXDIS

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION STATE FROM ROME OCTOBER 18, REPEATED
TO YOU:

QUOTE

S E C R E T ROME 11385

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CI, VT

SUBJECT: HIGHEST LEVEL VATICAN CONCERN OVER PROPAGANDA ON CHILE

REF: ROME 10729

1. DURING OCT 18 CALL ON UNRELATED SUBJECT, ARCHBISHOP BENELLI,
VATICAN DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE, EXPRESSED TO ILLING HIS AND
POPE'S GRAVE CONCERN OVER SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL LEFTIST CAM-
PAIGN TO MISCONSTRUE COMPLETELY REALITIES OF CHILEAN SITUATION.
BENELLI LABELLED EXAGGERATED COVERAGE OF EVENTS AS POSSIBLY
GREATEST SUCCESS OF COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA, AND HIGHLIGHTED FACT
THAT EVEN MODERATE AND CONSERVATIVE CIRCLES SEEM QUITE DISPOSED
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TO BELIEVE GROSSEST LIES ABOUT CHILEAN JUNTA'S EXCESSES. REALIZING
THAT ALLENDE'S FALL WAS ONE OF GREATEST SETBACKS TO COMMUNIST
CAUSE, BENELLI SAID, LEFTIST FORCES HAVE GREATLY CUT LOSSES BY
CONVINCING WORLD THAT ALLENDE'S FALL DUE EXCLUSIVELY TO FASCIST

AND EXTERNAL FORCES RATHER THAN TO SHORTCOMINGS OF ALLENDE'S OWN POLICIES AS IS RIGHTLY CASE. BENELLI EXPRESSED FEARS THAT THIS SUCCESSFUL COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN IS ONLY PORTENT OF HOW COMMUNISTS CAN INFLUENCE FREE WORLD MEDIA IN FUTURE.

2. AS IS UNFORTUNATELY NATURAL FOLLOWING COUP D'ETAT, BENELLI OBSERVED, THERE HAS ADMITTEDLY BEEN BLOODSHED DURING MOPPING UP PROCEDURES IN CHILE, BUT PAPAL NUNCIATURE, IN SANTIAGO, CARDINAL SILVA AND CHILEAN EPISCOPATE IN GENERAL HAVE ASSURED POPE PAUL THAT JUNTA MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO RETURN SITUATION TO NORMAL AND THAT STORIES ALLEGING BRUTAL REPRISALS IN INTERNATIONAL MEDIA ARE UNFOUNDED. BENELLI STRESSED THAT VALIDITY AND SINCERITY OF CARDINAL SILVA'S INTERPRETATION CANNOT BE CHALLENGED SINCE SILVA IS KNOWN INTERNATIONALLY AS ONE OF CHURCH'S LEADING PROGRESSIVES WHO, MOREOVER, GAVE TACIT SUPPORT TO PRESIDENT ALLENDE. DESPITE ITS CONVICTION THAT TRUTH FAR FROM PICTURE FOUND IN MEDIA, VATICAN HAS BEEN IMPOTENT IN ITS QUIET EFFORTS TO CONVINCE ANYONE OF SAME. POPE HAS BEEN UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE FROM WITHIN CHURCH, ESPECIALLY FROM FRANCE, TO SPEAK OUT AND CONDEMN EXCESSES OF JUNTA. IN PARTIAL RESPONSE TO ACCUSATIONS THAT CHURCH REMAINING SHAMELESSLY SILENT, "OSSERVATORE ROMANO" PRINTED EDITORIAL REPORTED IN REFTEL. NEVERTHELESS, DESPITE VATICAN'S EFFORTS, LEFTIST PROPAGANDA HAS BEEN REMARKABLY SUCCESSFUL EVEN WITH NUMBER OF MORE CONSERVATIVE CARDINALS AND PRELATES WHO SEEM INCAPABLE OF VIEWING

SITUATION OBJECTIVELY. RESULT IS THAT LEFTISTS HAVE MANAGED TO CREATE SITUATION IN WHICH POPE WOULD BE ATTACKED BY MODERATES IF HE DEFENDS TRUTH ON CHILE.

3. BENELLI NOTED THAT, CONTRARY TO PRESS REPORTS, JUNTA HAD IMMEDIATELY GRANTED SAFE CONDUCT PASSES TO ALL PERSONS WHO HAD SOUGHT REFUGE IN FOREIGN MISSIONS, INCLUDING PAPAL NUNCIATURE IN SANTIAGO. JUNTA AS ANXIOUS FOR THESE REFUGEES TO LEAVE CHILE AS ARE REFUGEES THEMSELVES, HOWEVER, IT HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO LOCATE ANY COUNTRY WILLING TO RECEIVE THEM.

4. VATICAN IS CONVINCED, AND NUNCIATURE HAS CONFIRMED, THAT DURING SECRET

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LAST MONTHS OF ALLENDE GOVERNMENT, CUBAN EMBASSY WAS SERVING AS DEPOT TO DISTRIBUTE EASTERN EUROPEAN MANUFACTURED ARMS TO CHILEAN WORKERS. ON BASIS OF THIS AND OTHER REPORTS, BENELLI CONVINCED THAT ALLENDE WAS ARMING POPULATION AND THAT STORIES ALLEGING THAT ALLENDE HAD PLANNED PRO-COMMUNIST COUP SEEM HIGHLY CREDIBLE. BENELLI SAID A RECENT ITALIAN NEWS CAST SHOWED A PILE OF ARMS THAT JUNTA HAD SEIZED ON WHICH WERE CLEARLY VISIBLE "MADE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA" MARKINGS. IN SECOND SHOWING OF NEWSCAST THIS PORTION HAD BEEN CUT. HAD ALLENDE GOVERNMENT NOT DISTRIBUTED THESE ARMS TO POPULACE, BENELLI STRESSED, POST-COUP BLOOD SHED WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH LIGHTER.

5. VATICAN TOLD ITALIAN LEFTIST INTERMEDIARY LAST WEEK THAT

POPE COULD NOT RECEIVE ISABEL ALLENDE, AND BENELLI EXPECTS THAT
THIS WILL DRAW FURTHER CRITICISM ON VATICAN.
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